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## The Genealogy of *the Political* and Citizenship Theory

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### Introduction

The concept of "the political" has been discussed in three main intellectual traditions of the Western political thought, i.e. conservatism, liberalism and Marxism. It has also been related to another significant concept which is citizenship theory. Nowadays after diminishing ideological left and right controversies, a kind of exchanging views is seen among the prominent thinkers of different intellectual traditions among them we may point out to Chantal Mouffe, the theorist of radical democracy who point to the concept of "the political" proposed by Carl Schmidt, the famous right theorist. The question raised here is: What are the common and distinct points regarding the concepts of "the political" and "citizenship" in different traditions of the Western political thought and what is their relationship?

Some topics should be clarified in order to enter this realm. The matter that in what space the concept of the political is placed as a basic concept, what its position in the late thinking systems and how it is seen, also from which perspective and formation the relationship between these two concepts (the political and citizenship) is explainable, should be explained and clarified.

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In its conventional meaning, politics is more related to the concept of state, power and formal governmental institutions. Whether action and activity in the political arena or political action and political knowledge have independent criteria, features or measurements or not, is an issue related to other spheres of social life. The issue, as Sartori puts it, has been of concern for thinkers and activists in this sphere (Sartori, 1973: 6). The issue of "the political" gains its importance in the political philosophy from its relevance with such topics as state, government, political institutions, the impact of social relations and spheres on the hidden dimension of politics and so on.

### **Genealogy of the concept of the political: politics and the political**

Firstly, we should make a conceptual distinction between the political and other concepts close to it through a negative method. As a late concept related to such thinkers as Karl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt, "the political" as a concept has roots in the developments of human society in the realms of action and thought through nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The political as the feature of politics signifies a specific moment which is distinct from other spheres; both at the theoretical level and action level, and it signifies a kind of independence and priority of its sphere. In relation with the political sphere and the political, the significant matter is that how to see it as an independent, distinct and self-sufficient arena. In general, Mouffe points to two viewpoints regarding "the political" and its nature: "Some theorists such as Hannah Arendt envisage the political as a space of freedom and public deliberation, while others see it as a space of power, conflict and antagonism". The common contribution of these two theoretical traditions which Mouffe points to, regarding the concept of "the political" is "authority and autonomy" of this arena of human action and knowledge. Explanation and examination of political phenomena based on distinctions and logic of other spheres such as economy, ethics, society and even culture are the peaks of Schmittian and Arendtian traditions for understanding

phenomena and actions in the political arena. “The political must therefore rest on its own ultimate distinctions, to which all action with a specifically political meaning can be traced. Let us assume that in the realm of morality the final distinctions are between good and evil, in aesthetics beautiful and ugly, in economics profitable and unprofitable” (Schmitt, 2007: 26). On the other side of this spectrum towards the autonomous sphere of the political, we should mention Ricoeur's argument within the Arendtian tradition. ‘This autonomy of the political [du politique] appears to me to draw on two contrasting traits. On the one hand, the political [le politique] realizes a human relation that cannot be reduced to the conflicts between classes . . . On the other hand, politics [la politique] develops specific evils, which are precisely political evils, evils of political power; these evils are not reducible to others, particularly not to economic alienation’ (Marchart, 2007: 36)

After that the Warsaw troops invaded Hungary in 1956 and suppressed its revolution, Ricoeur stated: only exists in great moments, in “crises”, in the climactic and turning points of history’ (Ricoeur, 1965: 255). This interpretation is exactly the same conjuncture of two theoretical traditions regarding the concept of "the political". Classified in the Arendtian intellectual tradition, Ricoeur approaches this Schmitt's interpretation that state as a political entity is the only institution that can make decision in "critical situations" (Schmitt, 2007: 46). By proximity of these paradigms, I mean that the political is related to the critical moments for both of them and in these moments, the political appears as the exception, not their interpretation of the position and role of the state.

On the other hand, the debates and controversies regarding this concept include basic and delicate distinction between "politics" and "the political". In Ricoeur's argumentation about the distinction between these two concepts, we observed that "the political" signifies a human relationship and "politics" mostly signifies ‘specific evils’, namely ‘evils of political power’. Mouffe also states something like this: “by ‘the

political' I mean the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies, while by 'politics' I mean the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political" (Mouffe, 2005: 9). Mouffe raises the same argument in another writing: By 'the political', I refer to the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different types of social relations. 'Politics', on the other side, indicates the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of 'the political' (Mouffe, 2000: 101).

As mentioned previously, in both Arendtian and Schmittian traditions, the political is related to the moment of establishing political society. The difference between these two paradigms is in their emphasis on the motivation in human groups that culminates in creating a political group or association. In both traditions that Volrath mentions them as the associative/ dissociative trait of the political, associativness/ dissociativness as the feature of the political does not signify only the phenomenon of political society (because politics is basically collective) but it signifies the way of establishing the society. Of course, the difference of the two paradigms is exactly that from Arendtian point of view, people with all their diversity gather in the public sphere freely, and their motivation, as Wolin puts it, is their care for "the common". But "from a Schmittian angle, though, a collectivity is established through an external antagonism Vis-a`-Vis an enemy or constitutive outside, that is, by way of dissociation" (Marchart, 2007: 40-41). Notwithstanding Schmitt regards the dissociative aspect as the lack of emphasis on common points as the unifying factor at the same time indicates a kind of reiterating on unifying common points among those human groups who have established a specific society. In other words, on the one hand, common points culminate in establishing a specific group and society, and on the other hand, different points

culminate in establishing the specific society. Schmitt defines the political not as a merely distinct sphere from other spheres but as an independent sphere: “The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation” (Schmitt, 2007: 26)

Here we can point out the distinction that Mouffe makes between politics and the political in which she defines the political as disruptive moment and politics as practices and institutions through which a particular order is organized (Marchart, 2007: 143). Hence as Schmitt puts it, the main motif of “the political” is the gathering of a group of people in the framework of a group or nation enjoying political sovereignty against other groups and the possibility of a war (Farhadpour, op. cit., 11). In other words, what Ricoeur call the “The Political Paradox” shows itself here. “The political paradox is constituted as paradox precisely because the conflicting relation of the two terms – the ‘contrast between permanence and flux, between rational idea and contingency, between theoretical concept and practical implementation’ is inseparable: ‘For Ricoeur, the core of the political paradox resides precisely in this interlacing of ideality and reality, of polity and policy, of reason and power’ (Dallmayr 1993: 183-7).

Schmitt emancipates the political, as a distinction that can be exist potentially in all social spheres, from the political sphere in its limited meaning, particularly as the state. This distinction, in Schmitt, is shown by the noun of “politics” and “political” as adjective. As Benjamin Arditi puts it: “This distinction between the noun “politics” and the adjective “political” is not fortuitous. It provides an initial – although by no means unproblematic – tool to develop a de-territorialized conception of the political which includes but exceeds the bounds of the formal sphere of politics. The advantage of this concept of the political is that it does not tie political phenomena to a particular institutional setting, and allows us to think the political as a **mobile** and **ubiquitous** field’ (Arditi, 1995: 13).

Regarding Schmitt's interpretation of inclusiveness of this sphere of human action we can claim that he considers every sphere of human action that culminates in creating friend and enemy as the salient characteristic of the political: "Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy" (Schmitt, 2007: 37). The interesting point is that at the other end of this spectrum that regards the political as the public sphere and public deliberation, there is a similar interpretation about the relationship between politics and the political. For example, Wolin says: I shall take the political to be an expression of the idea that a free society composed of diversities can nonetheless enjoy moments of commonality when, through public deliberations, collective power is used to promote or protect the well-being of the collectivity. Politics refers to the legitimized and public contestation, primarily by organized and unequal social powers, over access to the resources available to the public authorities of the collectivity. Politics is continuous, ceaseless, and endless. In contrast, the political is episodic, rare. (1996: 31) (Wolin, 1996: 31). Another delicate distinction that Mouffe considers between these two concepts namely politics and the political is: political science which deals with the empirical field of 'politics', and political theory which is the domain of philosophers who enquire not about facts of 'politics' but about the essence of 'the political'. (Mouffe, 2005: 8).

### **The political versus the social**

One of the features of Arendtian tradition regarding the political is to mark the distinction between "the political" and "the social". In the Arendtian tradition, the political is defined as the sphere of public deliberation and the common while the social has negative features (Marchart, 2007: 46). Arendt can be considered as the first thinker who stood against reducing the issues of political sphere to social ones. Beside Schmitt's criticism towards neutralization and sublimation, we can observe his criticism

towards reducing the context of political issues to other spheres as "the ethical", "the economic" and the "social". But Arendt asserts her stances more detailed and explicit against totalitarian systems including the left ones. In her comparative analysis of the French and American revolutions, Arendt criticizes Marx because, in Arendt's view, he has reduced the social to the mere poverty, so he has explained the political as a subcategory of poverty. "There is a conversion of the social to the political force in the concept of "exploitation" i.e. this perception that poverty is the result of exploitation by the dominated class that enjoys violence instruments... If poverty causes revolution, instead of destroying it, the economic conditions should become political factors and be explained within the framework of politics" (Arendt, 1982: 86-87). Arendt's stance against totalitarian systems can be observed in her critic on what she calls "dependence on bureaucratic, economic and instrumental rationality" which are placed in the background of the social. "A concept of the political has to be wrested from politics. So ... the 'pure concept' of the political has to be wrested from politics on the premise of its potential subordination to the social, that is, to bureaucratic, economic or instrumental forms of rationality. The invention of the political difference takes place against the background of society encroaching upon both the private and the political" (Marchart, 2007: 39).

As Lefort puts it, from Arendt's viewpoint, "when the distinction between public and private disappears, both the public realm and the private realm disappear. What appears in their place is something that might be termed 'the social', a vast organization, a network of multiple relations of dependence whose workings are governed by a dominant apparatus". That is, from Arendt's viewpoint, through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries "politics tends increasingly to lose its status, whilst the public space withers away and whilst private space becomes atrophied. In their place, we see the emergence of, on the one hand, social organization and, on the other, the little world of the individual, which Arendt calls the world of intimacy." (Lefort, 1988:49- 52)

The idea of neutrality in which both Arendtian and Schmittian traditions contribute is based on the notion that “the political” has been neutralized and colonized by “the social”. Schmitt propounded this issue after publishing the article “The Concept of The Political” in 1929 by publishing another article named “The Age of Neutralizations and De-politicizations”. He presumes that in the twentieth century, technology has replaced thought as the central sphere. By ‘central arena’, he means the other arenas incline to be resolved according to this one: in the sixteenth century this was theology, in the seventeenth century it was scientific rationality, in the eighteenth century, moralism and humanism, and in the nineteenth century it was economism. According to Schmitt wandering from a conflictual sphere has always caused to creation a neutral sphere: “Europeans always have wandered from a conflictual to a neutral sphere, and always the newly won neutral sphere has become immediately another arena of struggle, once again necessitating the search for a new neutral sphere. Scientific thinking was also unable to achieve peace. The religious wars evolved into the still cultural yet economically determined national wars of the 19th century and finally into economic wars. (Schmitt, 2007: 138)

In this regard, Wolin talks about the sublimation of ‘the political’ into other spheres. As Wolin puts it, in the modern age, the feature of ‘anti-politicism’ is to suggest specific alternatives and it is directed “at the sublimation rather than at the elimination of the political”. In other words, from Wolin’s viewpoint, in the modern age, instead of de-politicization we witness that the political sphere is occupied by the other spheres. The ‘community’ and the ‘organization’ become substitute ‘love objects’ and the political is sublimated in a double move: on the one hand the political proper, as the care for what is general to a society, becomes increasingly bureaucratized and discredited, on the other hand, more and more social spheres (in particular the sphere of corporate and other organizations) become ‘politicized’, albeit in a deficient way, so that ‘[w]hat has been denied to the political order has been assimilated to the organizational order’



(Wolin, 1996: 418). Thus, rather than completely disappearing, the political association is reduced ‘to the level of other associations at the same time that the latter have been elevated to the level of the political order and endowed with many of its characteristics and values’. (Marchart, 2007: 46-47)

### **Independence of the political: specificity of political rationality**

As pointed out before, the common contribution of Schmittian and Arendtian traditions regarding the nature of the political has been to emphasize on the independence of this sphere of human action. The other issue always accompanying the independence of the political is “specificity of political rationality”. In other words, rationality is the feature that draws distinction between this sphere and other spheres. For example, Schmitt considers the specificity of the political in making distinction between friend and enemy, and Arendt and her followers emphasize the public deliberation as rationality and specific feature of this arena of human action. Emphasizing specificity and independence of this sphere may be related to the emergence of modern thought and reflection on this issue.

For Sartori it is obvious that in the history of political thought the first “rigid distinction” between politics and other spheres of action is made by Machiavelli. It was there that ‘politics established itself as being different from morality and religion. ... Machiavelli not only declares the difference of politics from ethics, but also arrives at a clear-cut affirmation of its autonomy’. Things political had been juridicized by Roman and theologized by Christian thought so that, until Machiavelli, political discourse was ‘jointly and indissolubly ethicopolitical’ (10), that is to say, political questions were indissolubly intertwined with and subsumed under moral, religious and juridical issues, such as questions concerning the good regime or the well ordered or just society. Under historical conditions of the

ethicopolitical, it did not make much sense to speak about ‘politics’ outside the ambit of ethical, moral and religious discourse. Only with Machiavelli does it come about that politics ‘attains a distinctive identity and “autonomy”’; it is both specific and autonomous. This newly achieved autonomy is captured by Sartori in the following thesis, which condenses the Machiavellian revolution into a single tautological statement: ‘Politics is politics’. Politics is politics by virtue of being differentiated from other areas or activities and by virtue of following its very own autonomous rules and laws. Yet the most extreme form of the autonomy of politics was not, for Sartori, conceptualized by Machiavelli but by Hobbes, whose ‘panpoliticism’ assumes the ‘absolute independence and self-sufficiency of politics’, a ‘pure’ politics which is ‘all-pervading and all-causing’: ‘If the prince of Machiavelli governs according to the rules of politics, the leviathan of Hobbes governs by creating these rules and by establishing what politics is’. (Sartori, 1973: 10-12; Marchart, 2007: 50)

On this basis, according to Sartori, when we talk about the independence of the political, it should not be understood as an absolute independence but a relative concept. Besides, this issue includes four presumptions: (1) that politics is different; (2) that it is independent - i.e., that it adheres to its own laws; (3) that it is self-sufficient - i.e., autarchic in the sense that it is sufficient for explaining itself; (4) that it is a first cause, generating not only itself, but given its causal supremacy, everything else. (Sartori, 1973: 11) An important matter on which Sartori emphasizes is that, ‘the notion of politics applies to everything, and therefore to nothing in particular, as long as the realms of ethics, economics, politics, and society remain united and are not embodied in structural differentiations – that is, in structures and institutions which can be qualified as political in that they are different from those which are declared economic, religious, or social’. (Sartori, 1973: 6)

In a similar interpretation of the concept of the political and its nature as a non foundationalistic matter, it is the political and its nature that provides the basis for

emergence and collapse of other spheres. Marchart summarizes two Schmittian and Arendtian traditions precisely as follows: “the political has become autonomous precisely because it cannot be grounded anymore by any other social sphere nor by society as a whole. On the contrary, by stressing the autonomy of the political we might arrive at a point where the conditions are turned upside down, and the political itself now emerges as the instituting function of society: now it is the political which is the instance that grounds and ungrounds the social. So, for instance, in the Arendtian trajectory, Claude Lefort will call the political the moment by which the symbolic form of society is instituted, while for Ernesto Laclau, to some extent from within the Schmittian trajectory, the political is both the disruptive moment of the dislocation of the social and the founding moment of the social’s institution vis-a` -vis a radical outside”. (Marchart, 2007: 48)

So, according to these details the political has three characteristics: “first, the political is supposed to indicate the name for the specificity of politics: the specific quality, rationality or criterion of politics. Second, if the specific criterion is to be independent of and irreducible to other criteria, politics must be autonomous with respect to other domains or spheres of the social. The term ‘the political’ now indicates the autonomous quality of politics Vis-a` -Vis morality, the economic, and so on. And third, at a certain point – that is, when the ungrounded nature of the social becomes apparent – the political assumes primacy over the social and now indicates the very moment of institution/destitution of society. (Marchart, 2007:48)

According to this discussion, we can imagine a general feature under the concept of the political as the common feature of both traditions which is what Derrida calls “decision in the conditions of non-decision” (Tajik, 2004: 94). Given the notion of these two traditions about the political, we can discuss this feature under the third feature which is the moment of establishment or destitution of society. When we say that the political signifies the moment of establishment or destitution of society, in fact,

we mean Schmitt's interpretation of the political which is "the decision- making by the sovereign in the exceptional situation, or in other words, the genuine action of depicting a border in an empty space (the space of dispensing any kind of law) in order to designate the frontiers of sovereignty and making distinction between in and out, same and other, and finally friend and enemy (Farhadpour, 2008: 10-11). In a sense, in such a moment based on grouping or dis-grouping, a society is formed and established or collapsed. The significance of such a moment which is, according to Ricoeur, a great and dangerous moment, is more related to inclusion/exclusion of citizen. In other words, at the moment of forming law and sovereignty whom are regarded as the citizen and what their tasks and rights are (exclusive inclusion) and whom are excluded from the citizen (inclusive exclusion). The issue is related to the understanding of citizenship in political thought and at the same time, affects other realms related to citizenship rights and tasks.

### **Nature of the political and citizenship**

In the modern political theory, citizen is recognized as a political subject who has civil rights (equality before law, personal freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of belief, right of ownership, and right of concluding contracts with others), political rights (right of electing and being elected, right of participation in government), even social and economic rights that include different rights from access to health to access to work rights. At theoretical level, these rights belong to human kind and each human being enjoys these rights due to being human. But as Guy puts it, the problem begins when we reflect on the concept of human. In other words, does our definition of human include insane and handicapped people? Are those people held in particular places such as hospitals and old people's homes that belong to city but they do not attend it, included in this definition of citizen? (Guy, 2009: 15-16; Marshall, 1992). It seems that in each society, the domain and inclusion of citizen is changing given the

political developments and crises. I mean citizenship and being citizen are subjected to political developments and the moment of establishing a particular society in which the individuals are given this right or acquire it.

Now the question is: On what consensus and in what moment are the people considered as citizen included in this category?<sup>9</sup> Arendt considers those citizens who are exiting at the disruptive moment of the political from citizenship of a society (or nation-state in modern era) as people completely deprived of any rights. The real subject of human rights are expatriates, asylum seekers, stateless people or without citizenship documents. Universal inalienable human rights are meaningless independent from nation-state. People are regarded as human being only when they are subjects of a specific state. In other words, only due to the particular, namely being English, Egyptian or Mexican, one can participate in “human kind” (Farhadpour, op. cit: 14). In other words, from Arendt’s viewpoint, [in modern times] the problem is that political equality inevitably became confused with social equality. This is a tragic confusion, as equality can only be political, and it found a philosophical expression in the insensate idea that individuals are equal by birth, in the chimera of the rights of man. It must be noted that for Hannah Arendt, as for Burke, only the rights of citizens are real; the rights of man are a fiction. (Lefort, 1988: 52).

Citizenship as a dual concept consists of right/obligation in political thought is more related to depicting the status quo/ ideal status. Citizenship considered as “right of membership” or “master political identity” is based on the possibility of society and objectivity which is created and established at a specific moment. In fact, what designated in giving this right of membership or specific identity to citizen is the frontiers of inclusion in which these relations are regulated and whether the individual is recognized as having the right of citizenship or not. The issue that what features are required for giving the right is a key issue that seems dependent on designation of

borders which are compiled at a specific moment. As mentioned before, the point that Guy raises as the first difficulty of defining citizenship is the concept of human. May the insane and handicapped that live in a place separated from other people completely enjoy these rights (civil rights, political rights, social and economic rights)? So the first problem in this regard is related to the definition and inclusion of the people who can place in this realm. For example, Aristotle who considers citizen as the constituent of polis mentions several features for enjoying the situation: citizenship is not acquired by living in a place as the slaves and aliens are not citizen in spite of living in a place with other citizen. Those people who only have the civil rights of being accuser or accused in the courts are not regarded as citizen. Also children and old people cannot be citizen. But Aristotle defines citizen in a positive way too: Citizen is somebody who may participate in judging and occupying judiciary and high positions. Namely citizens are those individuals who participate in “power”. Citizen particularly is existent in democracy (Guy, 2008: 42-52). The interesting point of Aristotle’s definition is its descriptive/normative aspect. Once citizenship is a situation and right which belongs to the particular individuals who have common features, and another time, it signifies a condition that “should be” or “it is better to be”. Aristotle’s description also includes the features of an ideal citizen. The citizenship theory that deals with discussing these issues tries to provide a “multi-dimensional insight” i.e. a “comprehensive image” (Springs, 2003: 22). Hence, providing such an insight requires descriptive and normative aspects which is obvious in examining most of propounded theories regarding the relations among citizen and sovereign power, and designation of rights/obligations of citizen/subject, and most important in compiling acquiring this status and enjoying it for the main thinkers of this sphere.

The other problem which should be clarified is that the above-mentioned issue is about how citizenship is given and its probable mechanisms in different societies, but

our problem in this research is that how a thinker understands the sphere of the political or normative dimension of their thought about citizenship. The presumption is that basically political thought, as Wolin and Springs have reiterated, is a thought formed in critical contexts (Wolin, 1960: 8; Springs, op. cit.: 39). Also according to Springs, "the real" or the first stage of crisis which he calls "observation of disorder" is "the political". I mean, the political as the real in the interpretation of these thinkers is the basis of this research, not their normative interpretation or their solutions for exiting the crisis. In this research, political thought regarding ideal citizenship is considered as the normative aspect of political thought and it is examined. Of course, every thought consists the two aspects and our presumption is that political thought is basically normative.

For instance, if the political as a normative aspect in Hobbes's thought, we should say that Hobbes has proposed the abolition of politics though establishing Leviathan. I mean, the political as the arena of conflict is a pre-political issue. But if we regard the political as a part of political thought that consists both descriptive and normative dimensions, for Hobbes these two dimensions are in an organic relationship. This means that the descriptive dimension and what perceived as the real world on the one hand, and the normative dimension and what it is not existent in the real world, on the other, are included in this meaning and it is claimed that through establishing the normative dimension the crisis faced by the society will be resolved.

Citizenship right is subjected to how one sees the political. I mean, if the moment of establishment and the establishing rationality of political sphere are seen on the basis of common points and public reflection, then citizen participation and interaction in public sphere are considered as political virtue. But if we see this moment as the conflict arena, then participation in public sphere will not be possible, different solutions may be presented for realizing citizen participation in public sphere (for

example, Hobbes's subject/citizen or Mouffe's citizenship as master political identity). On the other hand, we know that equality is the central principle in participation which as Arendt puts it, does not mean natural equality but equality in front of a political institution: "equality in front of nomos, guaranteed equality, not because humans are created or born equally but because human beings are not equal naturally and they need an artificial institution; a city (polis) that makes them equal through its law. There is no equality except for a political real, in which human beings are equal as citizen, not as specific individuals" (Guy, 2008: 31).

## Conclusion

In this research, the political is considered as a part of explanatory implications that seeks to explain the conditions in order to respond existent necessities and human life crises. Political thought enters the realm of citizenship theory as a normative one, and the thinkers' thought is discussed in normative and ideal dimension. Of course we may claim that the very citizenship theory has explanatory and descriptive implications. The approach towards citizenship issue in this research is within the framework of political thought and is focused on normative aspect.

Different social movements try to develop the definition of citizenship and its inclusion for enjoying a status so that, as Marshall puts it, they can enjoy a series of rights meanwhile conducting a series of duties/obligations. Enjoying this status from legal viewpoint is the main concern for most of the social movements. Citizenship rights are the result of social movements that want to develop or support membership and belonging; the borders that define the frontiers of citizenship, and eventually define the social groups or totality of society. This will be realized at the moments which be called, as Ricoeur puts it, "great and dangerous moments". The main debate is around membership and belonging or inclusion/exclusion in a specific political society. This moment is when basically the political plays a crucial role as a disruptive



moment in creating and establishing the borders of a political society and will designate the frontiers of inclusion and exclusion.

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